RV BUSINESS

FROM THE EDITORS OF TL ENTERPRISES

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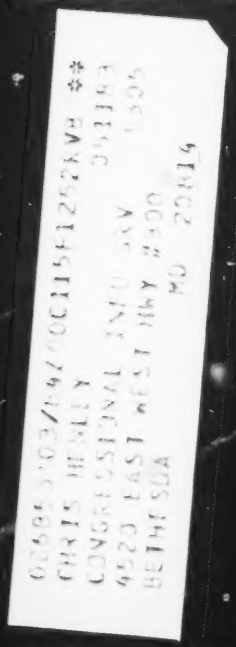
PRESERVING THE INDUSTRY'S FREEDOM OF SELF-REGULATION



International Marketing:

Surveying The '84 Imports RVs On A Slow Boat To China

Computerizing Your Dealership-- Part II

RV BUSINESS
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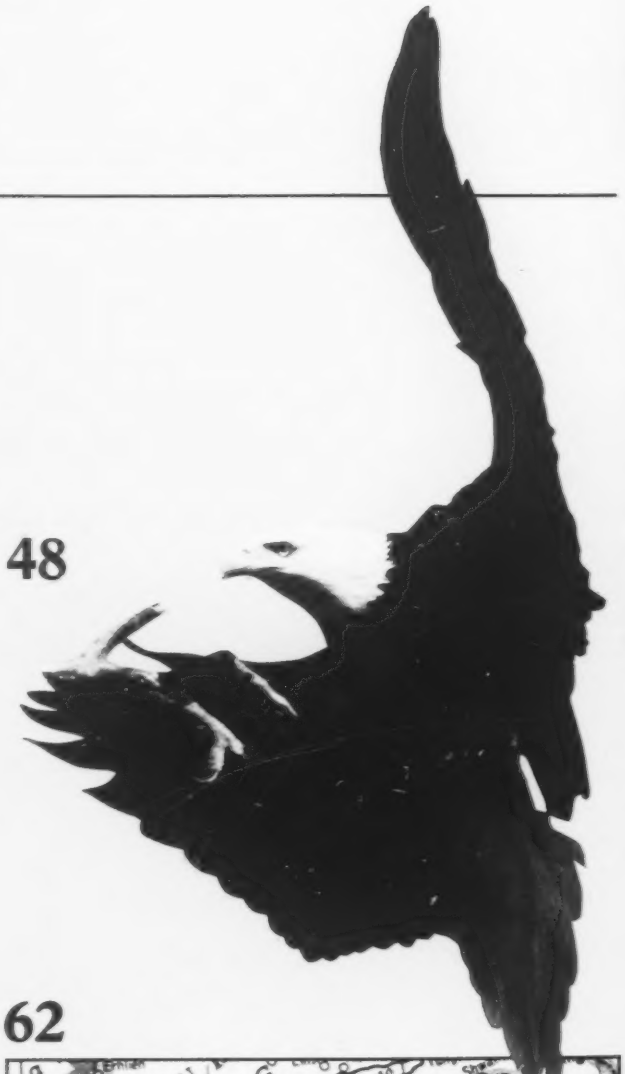

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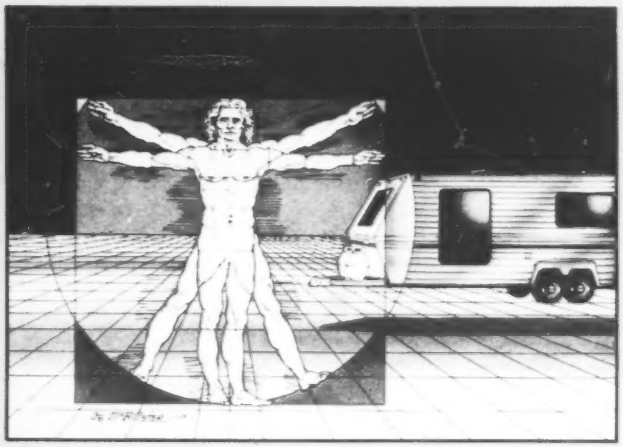

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ON THE COVER: *Freedom is like good art: You may not be able to define it, but you know it when you see it. We knew it when we saw it on our cover photo, and we defined it in our article on "Self-Regulation," beginning on page 48. Photo: Animals Animals/Ray Richardson.*

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Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey of its Dealer Advisory Board members

GAYLORD MAXWELL

RV dealers ended '83 feeling a chill in more than one way. Not only did most find themselves personally slipping and sliding on the snow and ice of one of the coldest-ever Christmas months, they found their profits on thin ice. Although both sales volume and unit sales were greater than in the previous December, the increase was the least for any month this year.

Regardless of the slowdown for the month, it has been a teriffic year for most dealers. The 22 dealers who comprise the Dealer Advisory Board averaged a 41% increase in sales volume and 26% more in unit sales. Those are impressive numbers—clear evidence that the RV industry is on the upswing.

As can be expected during a slow period, December profits were soft. Even used units and service were down. Several dealers reported the first "red ink" they've seen in a long time.

SALES VOLUME		
For Month	This year $ 4,861,018	+16%
	Last year $ 4,199,527	
Year to Date	This year $82,587,632	+41%
	Last year $58,553,779	

TOTAL UNIT SALES		
For Month	This year 262	+11%
	Last year 235	
Year to Date	This year 6299	+26%
	Last year 5007	

NEW UNIT SALES		
For Month	This year 176	+11%
	Last year 158	
Year to Date	This year 4014	+33%
	Last year 3007	

USED UNIT SALES		
For Month	This year 86	+12%
	Last year 77	
Year to Date	This year 2285	+14%
	Last year 2000	

MOTORHOMES

Although it is still the RV type showing the greatest sales increase for the year, even motorhomes softened in December. The 28% increase for the month is far off the pace as indicated by the 71% year-to-date increase. The larger dealers are still going very strong with Class A's. Several reported good action on large, expensive units. Used sales are still relatively good, but profits have softened somewhat. Also, the supply has been improving in some areas.

NEW	For Month	This year 77	+28%
		Last year 60	
	Year to Date	This year 1202	+71%
		Last year 701	
USED	For Month	This year 43	+ 8%
		Last year 40	
	Year to Date	This year 859	+13%
		Last year 761	

TRUCK CAMPERS

The increase for the month goes along with the 16% increase for the year. Used units are moving well and profits are rated excellent to good.

NEW	For Month	This year 14	+14%
		Last year 12	
	Year to Date	This year 255	+16%
		Last year 220	
USED	For Month	This year 5	+66%
		Last year 3	
	Year to Date	This year 225	+27%
		Last year 177	

TRAVEL TRAILERS

It's understandable why this category would suffer with the snow and cold weather. People just don't see snow and think trailer. However, dealers in areas where there wasn't much cold weather and no snow still reported sales as soft. A 21% drop from the previous December isn't something a trailer dealer can ignore. Perhaps more significant is the fact that the increase for the year is the lowest for any RV category: 15%. A few dealers on the DAB showed increases for the year, but many stayed about the same as 1982—or even dropped. A point for speculation is that competition is getting much stiffer in the trailer game.

NEW	For Month	This year 38	-21%
		Last year 48	
	Year to Date	This year 1049	+15%
		Last year 913	
USED	For Month	This year 29	- 3%
		Last year 30	
	Year to Date	This year 869	+24%
		Last year 702	

CAMPING TRAILERS

There's never much activity with folding camping trailers in December, so the small numbers are expected. The fact that new unit sales are up 26% for the year indicates that dealers in the RV type have had a good year. Profits were rated only fair on the few sales that were made in December.

NEW	For Month	This year 12	+ 20%
		Last year 10	
	Year to Date	This year 1161	+ 26%
		Last year 923	
USED	For Month	This year 5	+500%
		Last year 0	
	Year to Date	This year 230	- 19%
		Last year 285	

FIFTH-WHEELS

It has been a good year for fivers. Both new and used sales have been strong and profits have been good. One dealer on the DAB sold well over 100 new units during the year and another sold nearly 100. Those are impressive numbers. To sell fifth-wheels, as with any RV type, you must make a commitment in terms of inventory and expertise if you expect to get the numbers. Δ

NEW	For Month	This year 35	+25%
		Last year 28	
	Year to Date	This year 347	+39%
		Last year 250	
USED	For Month	This year 4	0
		Last year 4	
	Year to Date	This year 102	+ 36%
		Last year 75	

Associations

OLGA MARKOWITZ

When it comes to unfair taxation, somebody in Washington has to look out for the RVer. The **American Recreation Coalition** (ARC) is making its voice heard regarding the latest taxation proposal of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For details, turn to page 91 in the "Industry News" section.

Let's make it federal. The **Indiana Manufactured Housing Association** (IMHA) reports that Senate Bill 44 preempts state product liability law and proposes the creation of federal standards to be interpreted by state courts. The case against state product liability laws: The numerous state variations limit the ability of manufacturers to make informed decisions regarding the design of products for nationwide distribution and sale. By having a *federal* product liability law, uniformity and certainty of the law would ease what has become a serious burden on interstate commerce.

More politics! Some 20% of **California Travel Parks Association**'s (CTPA) membership has made startup contributions to the Recreation Political Action Committee (REC PAC). Treasurer Larry McConnell reports that additional contributions are continuing to arrive in response to the first announcement regarding PAC's formation. * * CTPA was the recipient of the Mike McManus Award, presented by the **National Campground Owners Association** (NCOA).

If you have had difficulty determining the geneological relationship of Project **J.O.V.E.**, **RVTA** (Recreational Vehicle Technicians Association) and **RVTI** (Recreational Vehicle Technical Institute), take note: Project J.O.V.E. provides training for unemployed persons through project funding. They train raw technicians. They were affiliated with RVTI, but that is no longer the case. RVTI does exist. Now it trains RV owners to care for their vehicles. It does not train technicians. RVTA is a national organization for seasoned RV technicians. It is designed to enable them to expand their knowledge by certification, seminars, newsletters. It is a nonprofit organization and is not funded; it is membership-supported through voluntary funding. Project J.O.V.E., 1140 Union Street, San Diego, California 92112; RVTI, 7242 University Avenue, La Mesa, California 92041; RVTA, PO Box 12216, Orlando, Florida 32809, or 1530-C Border Avenue, Corona, California 91720.

Maine Campground Owners Association's (MECOA) membership has reached 168, a 58% increase over the past two years. * * The association approved a code of ethics and voted to go to an 8½ x 11 magazine-style directory for tourist information in 1984. Maine thus becomes the fourth New England state to go to a larger format, following New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut. The code, to be posted in all campground offices, pledges the members to provide a pleasant camping experience, to keep facilities and grounds clean, to provide information on other campgrounds, and to be truthful in all advertising.—*R.L.*

The **Wisconsin Association of Campground Owners** (WACO) has scheduled its annual convention March 30 to April 1 at the Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton. "Back to Basics" is the theme of this year's convention, with the letters BASICS representing Business, Advertising, Sales, Ideas, Customer and Success. The convention has been combined with the Wisconsin Recreation Industries, a 1,000-member group of tourism-related businesses representing restaurants, resorts, ski hills and other facets of tourism.

Warehouse Distributors Association (WDA) has established October 1 as its deadline date for suppliers to submit their reproducible materials for the distributor catalog. Ask WDA for a free copy of the guidelines. WDA, PO Box 1128, Waukegan, Illinois 60085. Δ

RVIA, DECEMBER

The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during December 1983 was 24,800 units, up 35.5% from December of 1982.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco, Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

RV shipments were as follows in Dec. 1983		Dec. 1982	Percent Change	Cumulative 1983	Cumulative 1982	Percent Change
TRAVEL TRAILERS	3800	3300	+15.2%	71,900	53,800	+33.6%
FIFTH-WHEELS	1100	800	+37.5%	18,100	11,700	+54.7%
TRUCK CAMPERS	200	300	−33.3%	6800	5700	+19.3%
MULTI-USE VEHICLES	12,300	8900	+38.2%	154,200	111,300	+38.5%
TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES	2600	1400	+85.7%	33,400	19,300	+73.1%
TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS	500	200	+150.0%	5600	3900	+43.6%
TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES	1900	1200	+58.3%	30,500	18,000	+69.4%
FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS	2400	2200	+ 9.1%	37,500	34,300	+ 9.3%
TOTALS	24,800	18,300	+35.5%	358,000	258,000	+38.8%